

Statement of Congressman Ron Kind  
H. Res 664, Mourning the passing of President Reagan and celebrating his service.  
June 9, 2004

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the death of President Ronald Reagan and pay tribute to a great American. I extend my deepest sympathies and prayers to Mrs. Reagan and her family. With President Reagan's death, our country lost yet another member of the greatest generation, a member who typified his generation with his work ethic, his optimism, and his patriotism.

I believe that all of us, regardless of political affiliation, were impressed by how much President Reagan loved America, how much he believed in the basic goodness and decency of this country. He was so proud to represent a country that stood for freedom and equality, and he worked for many years to help spread freedom across the globe.

I was fortunate enough to witness firsthand the effect of freedom spreading across the world. After graduating from college, I had the privilege of traveling to Europe, and spending some time in countries formerly part of the Soviet Union that were struggling to gain a place in the world as free nations. My travels included a stop in Berlin to celebrate the reunification of Germany. I hammered away with a sledgehammer at the Berlin Wall with thousands of people from all over the world. I still have a small piece of the wall, which sits on my desk. It was inspiring to be a part of history in this way, and I can only imagine how wonderful it must have been for President Reagan to play such a seminal role in the transfer of the Soviet Union. With the end of the Cold War, we faced an exciting new world of independent nations in Eastern and Central Europe.

As we face current challenges throughout the world, I look back to the patriotism and optimism with which President Reagan approached international and domestic issues, and I feel grateful that we have his example. Aside from his leadership on issues of international importance, I also appreciate President Reagan's willingness to find bipartisan compromise in order to achieve results. To him, politics was not a blood sport; it was the art of the possible. Coming to Congress several years after both President Reagan and Speaker Tip O'Neill had retired, I have always enjoyed listening to my colleagues tell of the two men swapping stories and jokes as they negotiated legislation. President Reagan's bipartisan spirit and constant optimism are testament to his leadership skills and his love for this country.

May God bless his soul.